REMARKS

Claims 1-20 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1 and 19-20 are amended.

The courtesies extended to Applicants' representative by Examiner Armstrong at the interview held December 21, 2006, are appreciated. The reasons presented at the interview as warranting favorable action are incorporated into the remarks below and constitute Applicants' record of the interview.

The Office Action (i) rejects claims 1, 5-7, 10-11 and 13-20 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,866,510 to Polanyi in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,234,802 to Pella; (ii) rejects claims 2-4 and 12 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Polanyi in view of Pella, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,741,833 to McCormick; and (iii) rejects claims 8-9 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Polanyi in view of Pella, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 7,043,438 to Murakami. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections.

Polanyi is directed to teaching second language writing skills. A second language writing skills instruction system 100 (system 100) is standalone (Fig. 1), but parts of it can be distributed over a network (col. 8, lines 52-65). However, Polanyi does not disclose that system 100 can (or how it would) interact with other systems 100. System 100 has a controller 110, text storage memory 170, memory 120, and an input circuit 185 (Fig. 1). In operation, a user loads text from text storage memory 170 into memory 120. The text is segmented into "text building units", analyzed, and a structured representation is built (col. 3, lines 10-25). This structural representation is compared to stored structural representations of discourse and differences noted (col. 3, lines 26-38). These differences are compared to previously identified flaws. A more "appropriate" structural representation is then retrieved

and presented to the user (col. 3, lines 38-55) so that the user can improve his or her second language writing skills.

In summary, Polanyi discloses system 100 which identifies differences between input user writing and previously stored writing in order to identify differences. These differences are compared with flaws, and if any are found, the system uses the flaws to identify more appropriate writing stored on the system 100 to provide to the user as a teaching example.

In contrast, the claims are directed to a system or method in which scenarios having tasks are presented to the user in a virtual reality environment. The system allows user systems to connect with other user systems to allow for multiple users to communicate. This includes the ability for users to exchange text having highlighted terms that the system analyzes using a set of linguistic tools, the system searching on the network for information relating to the identified term, disambiguating the identified term, and presenting to a user example uses of the identified term having a meaning similar to the identified term to aid the user in comprehending the text.

Thus, Polanyi fails to disclose:

(1) a memory for storing a scenario having tasks to be carried out in the language;

(2) a connection manager able to accept one or more simultaneous connections requested over the network from one or more user systems;

(3) a virtual reality subsystem for representing the scenario in a physical setting; and

(4) a communication subsystem for providing at least one channel over which users of the user systems can communicate text to each other when carrying out the tasks in the language.

Pella is directed to an interactive 3-D (three dimensional) graphical representation of an environment on personal computer 20. In operation, a user interacts in the environment

with other "people" controlled by the system, which challenge the user with questions and tasks requiring responses by the user (abstract). A speech recognition system interprets the responses and acknowledges correct responses (see col. 10, lines 24-39). While personal computer 20 can be part of a network, Pella never discloses that any interaction can exist between different personal computers 20.

Thus, Pella fails to disclose: (1) a connection manager able to accept one or more simultaneous connections requested over the network from one or more user systems; and (2) a communication subsystem for providing at least one channel over which users of the user systems can communicate text to each other when carrying out the tasks in the language.

Thus, Pella fails to cure all of the deficiencies of Polanyi. Further, as agreed at the personal interview, the applied references do not disclose the ability of two or more users to communicate during use of the disclosed systems.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,

James A. Oliff
Registration No. 27,075

Jonathan H. Backenstose
Registration No. 47,399

JAO:JHB/ccs

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OLIFF & BERRIDGE, PLC
P.O. Box 19928
Alexandria, Virginia 22320
Telephone: (703) 836-6400

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